

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BAGHDA 00296 241524Z

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 NIC-01 SAB-01 SAJ-01 SAM-01 ACDA-05 IO-10

AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-07 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /098 W  
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R 221215Z MAR 75

FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1778

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0296

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR IZ

SUBJ: SULZBERGER INTERVIEW WITH SADDAM HUSSEIN

1. NY TIMES COLUMNIST CY SULZBERGER HAD TWO HOUR INTERVIEW  
WITH RCC VICE CHAIRMAN SADDAM HUSSEIN ON MAR 20.  
INTERVIEW COVERED WIDE RANGE OF SUBJS, BUT SADDAM  
WAS UNUSUALLY EVASIVE. PART OF FAULT MAY HAVE BEEN  
INTERPRETER. INTERVIEW ALSO ATTENDED BY NASIF AWAD,  
WHO INTRODUCED AS CHIEF OF PARTY PROPAGANDA. SADDAM'S  
COMMENTS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST WERE AS FOLLS:

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PAGE 02 BAGHDA 00296 241524Z

2. ABSENCE OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH U S: "MAIN

REASON IS U S ATTITUDE ON NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ISSUES AND INTERFERENCE IN IRAQI INTERNAL AFFAIRS. WE ARE DETERMINED TO BUILD UP OUR COUNTRY IN WHOLLY INDEPENDENT WAY. WHEN U S ACCEPTS THIS AS REALITY WE CAN NORMALIZE RELATIONS. WE SHALL BE WATCHING VERY CLOSELY U S ATTITUDE ON OUR ACCORD WITH IRAN AND TOWARD MIDDLE EAST. WE SHALL JUDGE U S IN THE LIGHT OF OUR CONCLUSIONS."

3. KURDISH WAR - SADDAM SAID BARZANI IS FINISHED AND IRAN AND IRAQ ARE BOTH SCRUPULOUSLY LIVING UP TO ACCORD. HE SAID IF ACCORD IS SABOTAGED IT WILL BE BY "INTERNATIONAL QUARTERS" AND IRAQ CAN DETECT WHO AND DEMONSTRATE ITS HOSTILITY. HE STRESSED THAT KURDISH AUTONOMY ALREADY FUNCTIONING WITH VIABLE INSTITUTIONS, FACT THAT KURDS HAVE FIVE MINISTERIAL PLACES (FOUR OF WHICH FILLED) AND THAT KURDS REPRESENTED IN NATIONAL FRONT AND WILL BE IN SOON TO BE CREATED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. SADDAM CLAIMED ISRAELIS HAD AIDED BARZANI BY SENDING ARMS THROUGH IRAN, PARTICULARLY EGYPTIAN WEAPONS CAPTURED IN 1967, AND WITH MILITARY TRAINING.

4. ON ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT - ANSWER WAS SO GENERAL TO BE MEANINGLESS DEALING WITH NEED FOR ISRAELIS NOT TO FORCE THEMSELVES ON ARABS BUT INTEGRATE INTO REGION.

5. ON RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS AND PARTICULARLY KUWAIT, SADDAM STATED FLATLY THAT "IRAQ HAS NO TERRITORIAL CLAIMS BEYOND ITS OWN FRONTIERS." (COMMENT: KUWAITIS COULD RIGHTLY ASK WHERE HE CONSIDERS THE FRONTIER. DG OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN MFA RECENTLY TOLD AUSTRIA AMB THAT WARBA IS PART OF IRAQ BECAUSE IT WAS FORMED FROM IRAQI SOIL WASHED DOWN THE RIBER.)

6. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION OF WHAT STATE IRAQ HAD BEST AND STRONGEST RELATIONS WITH, SADDAM MENTIONED ONLY ALGERIA. HE ALSO PRAISED FRANCE AS WORTHY OF EMULATION.

7. SADDAM BECAME EXCEPTIONALLY FRIENDLY DURING LATTER PART OF INTERVIEW AND INVITED SULZBERGER TO RETURN SOON WITH HIS WIFE AS OFFICIAL GUEST. SADDAM SAID HE WOULD IN ANY CASE SEE SULZBERGER IN PARIS LATE IN 1975 WHEN HE WOULD BE  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BAGHDA 00296 241524Z

MAKING OFFICIAL VISIT TO FRANCE.

8. SULZBERGER WAS STRUCK BY FACT THAT THREE TIMES DURING INTERVIEW SADDAM FINISHED ANSWER BY SAYING, "IF I AM STILL ALIVE." HE ALSO NOTED SADDAM SUFFERING FROM BACK TROUBLE AND NASIF AWAD SAID LATER SADDAM HAS SLIPPED DISC.

9. COMMENT: FACT THAT SADDAM AGAIN SPENT TWO HOURS

WITH PROMINENT AMERICAN AND MADE SPECIAL EFFORT TO CHARM HIM IS GOOD EVIDENCE OF HIS CONTINUING DESIRE TO PREPARE GROUND FOR EVENTUAL RESUMPTION. FACT THAT HIS RESPONSES WERE VAGUE AND CIRCUMLOCUTORY, PARTICULARLY ON ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT, WAS DISAPPOINTING TO SULZBERGER. I BELIEVE IT RESULT OF UNFORTUNATE TIMING OF INTERVIEW. SADDAM HAS TAKEN MAJOR RISK IN MAKING OVERNIGHT POLICY SHIFT TOWARD IRAN AND MAJOR CONCESSION ON SHATT AL-ARAB. IN ADDITION TO KURDS (BARZANI AND NON-BARZANI), OTHER POTENTIAL LOSERS LIKE ICP, RUSSIANS, EXTREMIST ELEMENTS IN PARTY, AND HIS ENEMIES ARE NOT AT ALL PLEASED WITH ACCORD. THEY MAY BE USING IT IN ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE SADDAM AND SEARCHING FOR WAYS TO SABOTAGE ACCORD. FOR EXAMPLE, WAS IT MERELY COINCIDENCE THAT IRAQI AIRLINE HIJACKED (BAGHDAD 238) JUST FIVE DAYS BEFORE ALGIERS ACCORD? SADDAM CANNOT, THEREFORE, AFFORD TO MAKE ANY NEW POLICY DEPARTURES ON SUCH SENSITIVE ISSUES AS RELATIONS WITH U S AND THE ME SETTLEMENT UNTIL HE HAS ASSURED SUPPORT FOR IRANIAN ACCORD.

10. THIS HYPOTHESIS IS FURTHER BORNE OUT BY PRESENCE OF NASIF AWAD AT INTERVIEW. THIS IS FIRST TIME TO MY KNOWLEDGE HE HAS BEEN PRESENT AT INTERVIEW WITH AMERICAN. I AM TOLD HE IS PALESTINIAN WHO IS IN CHARGE OF PROPAGANDA FOR BAATH NATIONAL LEADERSHIP. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SADDAM WANTED HIM PRESENT AS INSURANCE POLICY AGAINST RUMORS BEING SPREAD THAT TWO HOUR INTERVIEW WITH SULZBERGER PRESAGED NEW MOVE TOWARD U S.

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